

*The Address—Mr. Pearson*

I may quote from a statement made a few months ago by the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen) in a speech in Hamilton, in which he said:

According to the latest available official figures the average income of the Canadian non-farm family is \$5,000 a year. Taken as an average this is pretty good. But averages are often misleading. Once you start to analyse the figures behind this average you find that out of some 3,600,000 non-farm families in Canada almost 850,000 have cash incomes of less than \$3,000 a year. More than 160,000 families have incomes of less than \$1,000. That, you will agree, is real poverty.

In a paper presented to the British Columbia Conference on Social Welfare last year by Professor Dixon of the School of Social Work, the University of British Columbia, this paragraph was included:

When income is related to size of family the following approximate estimates are obtained. In 23 per cent of Canadian families with two or more children the head of the family earns less than \$3,000. In 45 per cent of the families he earns less than \$4,000.

There is no more direct and important move toward economic expansion than transforming an unemployed slum dweller or a sub-marginal farmer into a skilled worker, a full time producer, a normal spender who thereby creates more work for other people. Economic policies, then, and social policies should move forward together, and they are too often treated as separate and even conflicting. To enlarge opportunities, to improve the ability of people to take advantage of these opportunities is not only to attack poverty; it is to strengthen our whole economy, to increase the prosperity and raise the standards of the whole community.

For a country such as Canada, it also strengthens our unity. The problem of geography has always meant that there have been in Canada great regional differences in economic opportunity and economic interest. This is the main economic factor behind our problems of unity, and sound national policies have always been aimed at lessening them in one way or another. So, Mr. Speaker, to attack today's pockets of poverty is to make a major contribution, in the economic and social field, to national unity. These are the motives for the plan which this government has been developing, with the aim of eliminating poverty and fully utilizing our human resources. It is a plan for greater opportunities. It is not hard to talk about it, Mr. Speaker; the idea behind it is clear enough. But the application is going to be complex and very difficult indeed. Many existing programs will have to be broadened and intensified. New programs

[Mr. Pearson.]

will have to be developed. They involve many departments of government and therefore pose problems of federal co-ordination. So there must be, and there will be, set up machinery for this co-ordinating purpose. The responsibility is also federal and provincial, so there is an equal requirement, perhaps an even greater requirement, for co-operation and co-ordination between the two levels of government.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I propose a special federal-provincial conference to examine these problems which I have been outlining, which will, I hope, agree on the lines on which action can be concerted in a common cause. We realize our obligation as a government to make specific proposals to that conference. A program of this kind must be developed in stages. I would like to refer briefly to the early stages for which plans have already been prepared, because the right hon. gentleman—and I do not quarrel with him for this—says we are just talking in vague generalities and asks what are we going to do concretely. It is difficult to put these proposals forward in detail at this particular moment, but I would like to say something about the concrete proposals.

First, there is the area development program. It will be extended to other areas which, although not having heavy unemployment as defined for the existing designated areas, do have generally low levels of income. We will be proposing new methods of assisting industrial development in these areas.

Second, we are developing a series of improved measures to help people to qualify for and secure new jobs, to move when they need to, and to get the training they need.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister allow a question?

**Mr. Pearson:** A good deal has been done already in this field.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Is the Prime Minister in a position to say, in reference to point No. 1, how many cities or urban communities will be included in this plan; because he says the plan is under way?

**Mr. Pearson:** All I can say is that the existing designated areas, as my right hon. friend knows, include a good many urban communities. The existing number will be extended to include other areas which do not fall under that particular definition but where over the years in large regions there